



## 23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

### Martyrs Plato and Romanus

#### 18 November / 1 December

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 6:** The angelic powers were at Thy tomb; / the guards became as dead men. / Mary stood by Thy grave, / seeking Thy most pure Body. / Thou didst capture hell, not being tempted by it. / Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. / O Lord who didst rise from the Dead, / Glory to Thee!

**Tropar of Ss Plato and Romanus Tone 1:** The renowned pair of prize-winners glorified the Trinity./ They both fought valiantly and destroyed the enemy./ Glorious Plato and godly Romanus, pray for us to the Lover of mankind.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 6:** When Christ God the Giver of Life, / raised all of the dead from the valleys of misery with His Mighty Hand, / He bestowed resurrection on the human race. / He is the Saviour of all, the Resurrection, the Life, and the God of All.

**Kondak of St. Plato Tone 3:** Thy holy memory gladdens the world/ and calls all to thy venerable church./ We are gathered there praising thy triumphs/ and cry out to thee with faith:/ Deliver thy flock, O Plato, from all evil.

**Kondak of St. Romanus Tone 4:** Romanus, thou art a radiant star/ and the Church is illumined by thy contests./ She glorifies thy memory.

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#### Vespers

Lord I have Cried, Tone 6, on 10: Octoechos 4; St. Plato 3 (Full of valiant wisdom);  
St. Romanus 3 (Consumed by fasting); G: St. Plato (Awesome and all-glorious); N:  
Sunday Dogmatic in the 6<sup>th</sup> Tone. Aposticha: Octoechos.

#### Matins Gospel I

#### EPISTLE: Ephesians 2: 4-10

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

#### **EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES ...GOD MADE US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST ...FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED**

Again Christ is introduced, and it is a matter well worthy of our belief, because if the firstfruits live, so do we also. He has quickened both Him and us. Do you see that all this is said of Christ incarnate? ...Those who were dead. those who were children of wrath, those He has quickened. Do you behold 'the hope of His calling?' ...Do you behold the glory of His inheritance? ...As yet not one is actually raised, excepting that inasmuch as the Head has risen, we also are raised ...Truly there is need of the Spirit and of revelation, in order to understand the depth of these mysteries. And then so you may have no distrust about the matter, observe what he adds further ...Was faith then, you will say, enough to save us? No, but God, he says, has required this, lest He should save us, barren and without work at all. His expression is that faith saves, but it is because God so wills it that faith saves ...'We are His workmanship.'

He here alludes to the regeneration which is in reality a second creation. We have been brought from non-existence into being. As to what we were before, that is, the old man, we are dead.

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily IV on Ephesians II. B#57, pp. 66- 68.*

### **THE GOSPEL - LUKE 12: 16-21**

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

### **THE RICH MAN WHO HAD A GOOD HARVEST**

The Gospel for last Sunday related to us the parable about the Merciful Samaritan and finished with these words: "Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Lk. 10:37). And today's Gospel-how does it end? "But God said unto him... This night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (Lk. 12:20)

Here are two different ways. They both bring us to our last moment- to death. But there is no death, but rather eternal life. This means that these different paths bring us to the mysterious passage, to the meeting with eternity. All of us have to meet this mysterious something

And this meeting will prove to be the most important moment of our entire life on earth, basically what we have lived for. There aren't even words in our language to express it; but today's Gospel and also last Sunday's Gospel give us some indications of this moment, this meeting. At the end of one way will thunder the terrible word, "Fool!" (Lk. 12: 20). At the end of the other way, the Gospel does not even give us the word which we will hear, but says only: "Go, and do thou likewise!"

This means, only do the same, act in the same way! And you will receive what no words can express. What determines these two paths? The entire attitude of our life. And this attitude is expressed in our every step, in every action, in every breath. And how strange! Attitude seems to be something unimportant to people, something incidental. But it is not so in God's eyes. This attitude is just what defines that great mystery which you and I will meet then, at the moment of departure; and that which will determine our lot for ever.

The Merciful Samaritan lived in love for God and neighbour. And every human being was his neighbour. He was as if living in one great family of the Heavenly Father. For him everyone was a brother or sister, and he was a brother to everyone. And the one who fell among robbers was dear to him - he could not pass him by. He stopped, although he too was probably hurrying on some business, like those who did pass by. He helped him, put him on his donkey, brought him to an inn, and entrusted his further care to the innkeeper. He paid for him, and should the innkeeper spend more, he promised to reimburse him when he returned. From all this, it is not difficult for us to determine the attitude of this his life: he loved God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength, with all his mind; and his neighbour as himself (Lk. 10:27).

What was the life attitude of the rich man in today's Gospel? As a manager he apparently was a good one; and as a man he was sensible and practical. See how he reasoned: " I will pull down my barns, and build greater: and there will I bestow all my fruits and my (Lk. 12:18). Listen to what he says: my fruits, my goods, not even mentioning God; and yet the harvest came from God! And further: I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry (Lk. 12: 19). And where was love for neighbour? There was none. Not even a thought for his neighbour. All care was for himself alone: rest, food, drink, merriment - only for himself. Selfishness - this was the attitude of his life.

Brothers and sisters, what is the spirit of our life, what is its attitude? I think if we honestly answer this question, then we will see in ourselves some of both. We have in us mercy, but not a little egotism. And if this is so, let us think about these words: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." Indeed, this is so, this is true.

“This night” means for us any night, any day or hour; but it will definitely be taken. And then, what will our soul hear? What the rich man, the egotist, heard, “Fool!” or will we see that light which appeared to the Merciful Samaritan? Yes, this will be a sentence for all eternity, and this sentence depends on the whole attitude of our life, its spirit.

Before it is too late, let us choose this wonderful attitude of the Merciful Samaritan and let us fight our selfishness as our enemy. Let us fight until death. And let us always remember, “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt. 5:7)

*Archbishop Andrei, The One Thing Needful*

### **Saints of the week**

**18 November / 1 December — The Holy Martyr Platon** — From the town of Ancyra in Galatia, he was born and brought up a Christian. Even in his youth, he showed great perfection in every virtue. Platon did not conceal his faith in Christ the Lord, but preached it openly, denouncing idolaters for their bowing down to dead creatures in place of the living Creator. For this, he was brought before the governor, Agrippinus, for trial, and was harshly tortured by him. When the governor began to urge him to escape death and save his life by worshipping idols, Platon replied: 'There are two deaths: the temporal and the eternal; and there are two lives: the one transitory and the other without end.' Then Agrippinus put him to harsher torture. Among other tortures, he commanded that red-hot cannon balls be placed on his naked body, and that his flesh be cut into strips. 'Torture me more harshly', cried the martyr to the torturers, 'that your inhumanity and my endurance may be the more clearly seen. 'When the torturer spoke to the martyr about the philosopher Platon, saying that he was a pagan philosopher, he replied: 'I am not like Platon, nor he like me, except in our names. I learn and teach the wisdom that is of Christ, while he teaches the wisdom that is folly before God.' After that, Platon was thrown into prison, where he spent eighteen days without bread or water. When the warders marvelled that Platon could live without food for so long, he said to them: 'You are satiated by food, but I by holy prayer; you rejoice in wine, but I in Christ the true Vine.' He was finally beheaded with the sword in about 266, and received a wreath of eternal glory.

**The Holy Martyrs Romanus and Barulas** - St. Romanus was a deacon of the church in Caesarea and zealously preached the Gospel in Antioch. One day, there was an idolatrous feast. The Eparch of Antioch, Asclypiades, went to enter a pagan temple to offer sacrifices, but Romanus stood in the way and said: ``You sin, O Governor, when you go to the idols. The idols are not gods-Christ is the only true God." The enraged eparch subjected Romanus to tortures and had him flogged and scraped without mercy. During this, St. Romanus saw a child by the name of Barulas, and said to Asclypiades: ``Even this small child has more understanding than you, old man, for he knows the true God and you do not." The eparch questioned Barulas about his faith, and he confessed Christ the Lord as the One True God, contrary to false idolatry. Asclypiades commanded that young Barulas be beheaded, and St. Romanus be strangled in prison. Thus, both of these martyrs inherited the Kingdom of Christ in the year 303.

**Also commemorated on this day:** St. Nicholas confessor, priest (1948). Martyrs Zacchaeus the Deacon and Alphaeus, of Caesarea in Palestine (303). Synaxis of All Saints of Estonia. St. Mawes, bishop in Cornwall and Brittany (5th c.). St. Mabyn, nun of Cornwall. New Martyrs Anastasius of Epirus and Daniel. Martyr Romanus, who suffered under Maximian (305). St. Odo of Cluny (942).

**19 November / 2 December — The Holy Prophet Obadiah** — Obadiah lived at the court of King Ahab, but, when the king turned away from true worship and bowed down to idols, Obadiah did not follow the king's example, but continued to serve the one, true God. When the wicked Queen Jezebel, because of her feud with Elias, hunted down all the prophets of God, Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them in two caves, feeding them till the persecution was over (I Kings 18:4). A contemporary of the great Prophet Elias, Obadiah revered him greatly and hearkened to him in all things, being a follower and pupil of his. He lived nine hundred years before Christ, and entered peacefully into rest.

**The Venerable Barlaam and Ioasaph the Heir-** Barlaam and Ioasaph were Indian ascetics. Ioasaph was son and heir to King Abenner. By God's providence, elder Barlaam visited him, taught him the Christian Faith and baptized him. After that, the elder withdrew to a mountain to live a life of asceticism, but Ioasaph remained to struggle with many temptations in the world, and by God's grace, to overcome them. Ioasaph finally succeeded in bringing his father to Christ. After he was baptized, King Abenner lived four years in deep repentance-for he had committed grave sins in persecuting Christians-and then ended his earthly existence and went to the better life. The young Ioasaph turned over the rule of the kingdom to his friend Barachias, and entered the wilderness to live a life of asceticism for the sake of Christ.

His one desire on earth was to see his spiritual father, elder Barlaam, once again. The merciful God fulfilled his desire, and one day Ioasaph stood before Barlaam's cave and cried out: "Bless me, father!" Elder Barlaam labored in asceticism in the wilderness for seventy years and lived one hundred years in all. St. Ioasaph himself left his kingdom at the age of twenty-five, and went into the wilderness where he lived for thirty-five years. They both had great love for the Lord Jesus, brought many to the true Faith and entered into the eternal joy of their Lord.

**St. Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow** - Born of a priestly family near Moscow in 1782, he entered seminary at a young age and soon distinguished himself for his piety and his scholarship of ancient languages. He was tonsured a monk, but was made a professor at the seminary in Moscow, where his expositions of the Faith, spoken and written, caused him to be regarded as a Father of the Church in his own time; many called him "the new Chrysostom."

In 1817, at the age of thirty-five, he was consecrated bishop, and in only a few years rose to the rank of Metropolitan of Moscow, the highest office in the Russian Church since Peter the Great abolished the Patriarchate. He remained Metropolitan for the rest of his life. Saint Philaret seemed literally tireless in his labors for the Church: no-one knew when he slept, and his servant, no matter when he came to the Metropolitan's quarters, would always find him working at his desk. He worked to restore moral standards among the clergy, which had fallen into laxity. Whenever he was forced to depose a cleric, he would secretly contribute to the family's needs out of his own resources. Similarly, he used up all of his financial resources in charitable works, always taking care that his donations were kept secret. He funded the building of a large hospice for orphans and children of poor clergy families.

St Philaret gave his full support to the fifty-year project of translating the Bible into Russian, and translated several Old Testament books himself, though the project was opposed by the Tsar and by some powerful groups in the Church. He supported the work of the fathers of Optina Monastery to publish translations of the Fathers of the Church; these translations, when they appeared, contributed to a great spiritual awakening in Russia.

He reposed in peace in 1867 at the age of eighty-five. The well-loved "Morning Prayer of Philaret of Moscow" which begins "Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace..." was brought into Orthodox piety by St Philaret but seems originally to have been written by Francois Fenelon, the French Quietist writer. The prayer also came to be used by the Optina Elders and is sometimes referred to as the "Morning Prayer of the Optina Elders." The prayer appears in several similar versions.

*O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will. In every hour of the day reveal Your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events let me not forget that all are sent by You. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering or embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of this coming day with all that it will bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray You Yourself in me. Amen.*

**St. Egbert, archbishop of York (766)** - He was son of Eata and brother of Eadbert, King of Northumbria. Having received deacon's Orders at Rome he returned to Northumbria and was appointed to the See of York in 732. He received the pallium in 735, thus becoming second Archbishop of York, the title having been lost to that church since the flight of Saint Paulinus to Kent. He was thus placed in a position to carry out many needed reforms in which he proved himself a strict disciplinarian, but was at the same time remarkable for sweetness and gentleness. One of his greatest works was the foundation of the famous School of York and its celebrated library. Alcuin was among his pupils. Eadbert resigned his throne to enter the monastery, and the two men spent their last years in retirement and prayer. Egbert's best known work is a collection of canonical regulations.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Martyr Barlaam of Caesarea in Cappadocia (304). New Hieromartyr priest John Vishnevsky (1920). New Hieromartyrs Porphyrius (Gulevich) bishop of Simpheropol and Crimeria, Ioasaph (Udalov) bishop of Chistopol, deacon Antonius (Korzha), monk Barpholomeus (Ratnykh), priest Vladimir Pischulin, archpriest Demetrius Kiranov, priest John Bliumovich, archpriest Nicholas Mezentsev, priest Timothy Izotov (1937). New Hieromartyrs Sergius Mikhaev, Michael Dmitriev, Alexandra Mishutina, John Malinovsky, Constantine Mikhailovsky, Alexander Serebrov, Ignatius Teslin, John Piramidin, Simeon Krivosheev, John Florovsky, Jacob Brilliantov, Demetrius Kuklin, Jacob Peredery priests, New Hieromartyrs Ioasaph Krimzin, Gennady Rebeza, Peter Mamontov, Gerasim Sukhov, Michael Kvanin, Martyr Valentine Kornienko, Peter Antonov, Leonid Salkov, Timothy Kucherov (1937). oSt. Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia (1991). Venerable Barlaam, abbot of the Kiev Caves (1065). Uncovering of the relics (1626) of Monk-martyr Adrian, abbot of Poshekhonye (1550). Martyr Azes of Isauria, and with him 150 soldiers (284). Martyr Heliodorus in Pamphylia (273). Venerable Hilarion of Georgia, wonderworker of Thessalonica (875) (Georgia). "The Joy of All who Sorrow" (1863) Icon of the Mother of

God. St. Patroclus of Bourges (577). Martyr Agapius of Gaza (306). St. Simon, wonderworker of Calabria (10th c.). Martyrs Anthimus, Thalalaeus, Christopher, Euphemia and her children. Martyr Pancharius. Martyr Barlaam of Antioch.

**20 November / 3 December — Forefeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — Our Holy Father Gregory of Decapolis** — He was born in Isaurian Decapolis of eminent and devout parents, Sergius and Maria. When he had finished his schooling, his parents desired him to marry, but he fled to the desert and became a monk. He lived in various places: in Byzantium and Rome, and on Mount Olympus. Wherever he found himself, he made men marvel by his asceticism and miracles. It happened at times that his face was lit up with heavenly light, and that angels of God appeared to him; he looked upon the beauty of the angels and heard their blessed singing. He lived a long and godly life, and died peacefully in Constantinople in the ninth century, his soul entering into the joy of his Lord.

**St Proclus, Patriarch of Constantinople** - Proclus was a disciple of St. John Chrysostom. In the year 426 he was consecrated Bishop of Cyzicus, and in 435 was chosen Patriarch of Constantinople. He governed the Church of God as a prudent hierarch. During his tenure, two significant events occurred. The first was the translation of the relics of St. John Chrysostom from Comana to Constantinople, at the desire of both the emperor and the patriarch. Emperor Theodosius the Younger was then reigning with his sister, Pulcheria. The second event was the great earthquake in Constantinople and the surrounding countryside. Many of the largest and most beautiful buildings were destroyed by this terrible earthquake. Then the patriarch, with the emperor, many of the clergy, nobles and people, came out in a procession of supplication. As they were praying to God, a child was miraculously lifted high in the air, until he was out of sight. Then he returned and was lowered gently to the ground. Asked where he had been, the child replied that he had been lifted up to heaven among the angels and that he had heard the angels sing: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!" Upon hearing this, all the people in the procession began to sing it and the earthquake ceased immediately. From that time on, this beautiful hymn was adopted by the Church. The child soon reposed, and was interred in the Church of St. Irene. In all, St. Proclus served as a hierarch for twenty years and reposed peacefully in the Lord in the year 446.

**At Bury St. Edmund in Suffolk, St. Edmund, king of E. Anglia, martyr (869)** - On Christmas Day 855 a young man aged fourteen was acclaimed King of Norfolk by the ruling men and clergy of that county. The following year the leaders of Suffolk also made him their king. For fifteen years Edmund ruled over the East Angles with what all acknowledged as Christian dignity and justice. He himself seems to have modelled his piety on that of King David in the Old Testament, becoming especially proficient at reciting the psalms in public worship. From the year 866 his kingdom was increasingly threatened by Danish invasions. For four years the East Angles managed to keep a shaky, often broken peace with them. Then the invaders burned Thetford. King Edmund's army attacked them there but could not defeat the marauders. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the Danes 'killed the king and overcame all the land', adding that 'they destroyed all the churches that they came to, and at the same time reaching Peterborough, killed the abbot and monks and burned and broke everything they found there'. He thus remains the only English sovereign until the time of King Charles I to die for religious beliefs as well as the defence of his throne. For centuries the holy relics of King Edmund remained incorrupt, and innumerable miracles were wrought through his intercession. The skull of St. Edmund is at present in the basilica of St. Sernin in Toulouse, while his holy bones are in the private chapel of the Duke of Norfolk in Arundel Castle.

**Also commemorated on this day:** New Hieromartyrs Macarius bishop of Ecaterinoslav, Alexis, Alexander, Vladimir, John, Alexis, Basil, Nicholas, John, Emilian, Nocolos priests and Hieromartyrs Arsenius, Eutihus and Hillarion, Woman Hieromartyr Ioanicus hegumen (1937). New Woman Hieromartyr Tatiana (after 1937). Venerable Diodorus of George Hill (Solovki) (1633). Martyr Dasius of Dorostolum (Romania) (303). Martyrs Eustace, Thespesius, and Anatolius of Nicaea (312). Hieromartyrs Nerses and Joseph; and John, Saverius, Isaac, and Hypatius, bishops of Persia; Martyrs Azades, Sasonius, Thecla, and Anna (343). Martyrs Bautha and Denachis, who suffered with Hieromartyr Nerses of Persia (343). St. Isaac, bishop of Armenia (440). Venerable Theoctistus the Confessor (855). St. Sozomen of Cyprus (12th c.).

**21 November / 4 December — The Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast** — When the most holy Virgin Mary had reached the age of three, her parents, holy Joachim and Anna, took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem, to give her to the service of God in fulfilment of their promise. It was three days' journey to Jerusalem, but, going as they were on God's work, they did not find the journey difficult. Many of Joachim and Anna's kinsmen gathered to take part in this celebration, in which the invisible angels of God also took part. Maidens went ahead with lighted candles in their hands, followed by the most holy Virgin, led on either side by her father and mother. The Virgin was clad in royal and beautiful garments, like those of the 'king's daughter', the Bride of God (Ps. 44:9,10). Behind them walked many of their kinsfolk and friends, all bearing lighted candles. There were fifteen steps

leading to the Temple. Her parents stood the Virgin on the first step, and she ran quickly to the top on her own, where the High Priest, Zacharias, the father of St John the Forerunner, met her and, taking her by the hand, led her not only into the Temple but into the Holy of Holies, the holiest place of all, into which none could enter except the High Priest, and that once a year. St Theophylact of Ochrid says that Zacharias was 'out of himself, and moved by God' when he led the Virgin into the chief place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain—otherwise there could be no explanation of his action. Her parents then offered sacrifices to God, according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home, leaving the most holy Virgin in the Temple. She dwelt in the Temple for nine whole years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often. When they departed this life, the holy Virgin was left an orphan, and longed to remain in the Temple for the rest of her days, without entering into marriage. This being contrary both to the Law and Israelite custom, she was confided at the age of twelve to St Joseph, a kinsman of hers in Nazareth, so that she might, under the protection of betrothal, live in virginity and thus fulfil both her desire and the demands of the Law, for it was unknown in Israel at that time for a girl to vow perpetual virginity. The holy Virgin Mary was the first to do this, and was later followed by thousand upon thousand of virgin men and women in the Church of Christ.

**St. Columbanus, abbot and founder of Luxeuil Abbey, France (615)** - Born 543 at West Leinster, Ireland, handsome and educated, Columbanus was torn between a desire for God and easy access to the pleasures of the world. Acting on advice of a holy anchoress, he decided to withdraw from the world; his family opposed the choice, his mother going so far as to block the door. Monk at Lough Erne. He studied Scripture extensively, and wrote a commentary on the Psalms. Monk at Bangor under abbot Saint Comgall. In middle age, Columbanus felt a call to missionary life. With twelve companions (Saint Attala, Columbanus the Younger, Cummain, Domgal, Eogain, Eunan, Saint Gall, Gurgano, Libran, Lua, Sigisbert and Waldoleno) he travelled to Scotland, England, and then to France in 585. The area, though nominally Christian, had fallen far from the faith, but were ready for missionaries, and they had some success. They were warmly greeted at the court of Gontram, and king of Burgundy invited the band to stay. They chose the half-ruined Roman fortress of Annegray in the Vosges Mountains for their new home with Columbanus as their abbot. The simple lives and obvious holiness of the group drew disciples to join them, and the sick to be healed by their prayers. Columbanus, to find solitude for prayer, often lived for long periods in a cave seven miles from the monastery, using a messenger to stay in touch with his brothers. When the number of new monks over-crowded the old fortress, King Gontram gave them the old castle of Luxeuil to found a new house in 590. Soon after, a third house was founded at Fontaines. Columbanus served as master of them all, and wrote a Rule for them; it incorporated many Celtic practices, was approved by the Council of Macon in 627, but was superseded by the Benedictine. Problems arose early in the 7th century. Many Frankish bishops objected to a foreign missionary with so much influence, to the Celtic practices he brought, especially those related to Easter, and his independence from them. In 602 he was summoned to appear before them for judgment; instead of appearing, he sent a letter advising them to hold more synods, and to concern themselves with more important things than which rite he used to celebrate Easter. The dispute over Easter continued to years, with Columbanus appealing to multiple popes for help, but was only settled with Columbanus abandoned the Celtic calendar when he moved to Italy and adopted Eastern Orthodox Pascha. In addition to his problems with the bishops, Columbanus spoke out against vice and corruption in the royal household and court, which was in the midst of a series of complex power grabs. Brunehault stirred up the bishops and nobility against the abbot; Thierry ordered him to conform to the local ways, and shut up. Columbanus refused, and was briefly imprisoned at Besançon, but he escaped and returned to Luxeuil. Thierry and Brunehault sent an armed force to force him and his foreign monks back to Ireland. As soon as his ship set sail, a storm drove them back to shore; the captain took it as a sign, and set the monks free. They made their way to King Clothaire at Soissons, Neustria and then the court of King Theodebert of Austrasia in 611. He travelled to Metz, then Mainz, Suevi, Alamanni, and finally Lake Zurich. Their evangelization work there was unsuccessful, and the group passed on to Arbon, then Bregenz, and then Lake Constance. Saint Gall, who knew the local language best, took the lead in this region; many were converted to the faith, and the group founded a new monastery as their home and base. However, a year later political upheaval caused Columbanus to cross the Alps into Italy, arriving in Milan in 612. The Christian royal family treated him well, and he preached and wrote against Arianism and Nestorianism. In gratitude, the Lombard king gave him a track of land call Bobbio between Milan and Genoa. There he rebuilt a half-ruined church of Saint Peter, and around it he founded an abbey that was to be the source for evangelization throughout northern Italy for centuries to come. Columbanus always enjoyed being in the forests and caves, and as he walked through the woods birds and squirrels would ride on his shoulders. Toward the end of his life came word that his old enemies were dead, and his brothers wanted him to come back north, but he declined. Knowing that his time was almost done, he retired to a cave for solitude, and died as he had predicted. His influence continued for centuries as those he converted handed on the faith, the brothers he taught evangelised untold numbers more, and his brother monks founded over one hundred monasteries to protect learning and spread the faith. Miracles ascribed to Columbanus include: to obtain food for a sick brother monk, he cured the wife of the donor; once when he was surrounded by wolves, he simply walked through them; at one point he needed a cave for his solitary prayers; a bear lived there; when Columbanus asked, the bear left; when he needed water in

order to live in the cave, a spring appeared nearby; when the Luxeuil monastery granary ran empty, he prayed over it and it refilled; he multiplied bread and beer for his community; he cured several sick monks, who then got straight out of bed to reap the monastery's harvest; gave sight to a blind man at Orleans; he destroyed a vat of beer being prepared for a pagan festival by breathing on it; when the monastery needed help in the fields, he tamed a bear, and yoked it to a plough.

**Also commemorated on this day:** New Martyrs Priest Alexander Khotovitsky of New York (1937), and Priest Alexis Benemansky of Tver (1937). Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Everlasting Hope".

**22 November / 5 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — The Holy Martyr Cecilia** — Born in Rome of rich and eminent parents, she had a firm faith in Christ the Lord and a great zeal for the Faith. Vowing life-long virginity to God, holy Cecilia wore a rough hair-shirt underneath the costly raiment that her parents gave her. When they forced her into marriage with a pagan, Valerian, she spent the first night urging her new-wedded bridegroom to go to Bishop Urban for baptism, and then himself to live a life of virginity. Embracing the Christian faith, Valerian also brought his brother Tibertius to it. Both brothers were very soon condemned to death for their faith, but their zeal did not falter in the face of death itself. Taken to the scaffold, these two brothers succeeded in bringing the captain of the guard, Maximus, to the Faith, and they all three suffered together for Christ the Lord. St Cecilia buried their bodies together and was then herself taken for trial, having unwearingly won over many pagans to the Christian faith. In one evening, she had won over four hundred souls. When the judge asked her whence came her daring, she answered: 'From a pure conscience and an unquestioning faith'. After harsh torture, she was condemned to be beheaded with the sword. The executioner brought the sword down on her neck three times, but failed to kill her; he only wounded her and the blood ran down from her wounds, being caught in kerchiefs and bowls by the faithful to use for healing. Three days later, Christ's martyr and virgin gave her spirit into the hands of her Lord, to rejoice with him in eternity. St Cecilia suffered with the others in about the year 230. Her relics are preserved in the church dedicated to her name in Rome. In the Western Church, St Cecilia is regarded as the patron of Church Music.

**Martyrdom of St. Michael, prince of Tver** - Holy Nobleborn Prince Michael of Tver was born in the year 1272, already after the death of his father Greatprince Yaroslav Yaroslavich, - a brother by birth of holy Nobleborn Prince Alexander Nevsky. On the journey to the Horde prince Yaroslav had fallen ill, and having taken monastic vows with the name Athanasii (Afanasii), he died. Michael's mother, Xenia (Ksenia), raised her son in fervent love towards God. Michael was educated and studied under the guidance of the Novgorod archbishop (probably Kliment). He took the place of his older brother Svyatoslav in the Tver principality. In 1285 he built a stone church in honour of the Saviour's Transfiguration in place of the wooden church of Saints Cosmas and Damian. Upon the death of Greatprince Andrei Alexandrovich (1305), Michael - through right of seniority, received at the Horde the yarlyk-grant to the greatprincely throne. But the Moscow prince Yurii Danilovich would not submit to this, since he sought the greatprincely rule for himself. He was often at the Golden Horde of the new khan Uzbek, who had accepted Mahometanism and was distinguished by his cruelty and fanaticism. Prince Yurii knew how to please the khan, and he married his sister Konchaka and became greatprince. And even with this he did not quiet down, but instead began an internecine war with Tver. In the army of Yurii was also a detachment of Tatars sent by Uzbek, with Kavgadi at the head. But the men of Tver, with holy Prince Michael at the head, on 22 December 1317 defeated Yurii in a route. Many captives were taken, in which number were Kavgadi - whom Saint Michael released, and the Moscow prince's wife Konchaka, who unexpectedly died at Tver. Prince Yurii slandered Saint Michael afront the khan, accusing him of poisoning Konchaka. The khan became enraged, threatening to destroy the princely votchina-holding of Saint Michael, and demanded that he appear to render an answering. Not wishing to spill Russian blood in an unequal struggle with the khan, Saint Michael humbly set out to the Horde, realising that this meant death for him. He took his farewell from his family and from the Tver people, and received blessing for his exploit of martyrdom from his spiritual father hegumen John. "Father, - said the saint, - I was much concerned about the peace of Christians, but through my sins, I was not able to stop internecine war. Now give me blessing, if it should hold having my blood spilled for them, that they might have some respite, and that for me the Lord forgive my sins".

At the Horde an unjust trial was held over the saint, which pronounced him guilty in disobedience to the khan and sentenced him to death. They removed him under guard and put him in an heavy wooden stock. As was his habit, in prison Saint Michael constantly read the Psalter and blessed the Lord for granting him to suffer. He asked not to be abandoned in his present torments. Since the hands of the holy sufferer were secured in the stock, a boy sat before him and turned the pages of the Psalter. The holy prince-captive long languished at the Horde, enduring beatings and ridicule. They suggested that he flee, but the saint bravely answered: "In all my life I never fled an enemy, and if in saving myself my people remained in peril, what glory is it to me? No, let it be as the Lord doth will". Through the mercy of God, he was not deprived of Christian solace: Orthodox priests attended to him, - the hegumens Aleksandr and Mark, and he each week made confession and communed the Holy Mysteries of Christ, receiving

before his death a Christian preparation. At the instigation of prince Yurii and Kavgadi, who took revenge on the holy prince for their defeat, assassins rushed into the encampment where the captive was held. They fiercely beat the martyr and kicked at him with their feet, after which one of them stabbed Saint Michael with a knife (1318).

The stripped body of the holy martyr was exposed for abuse, and later they covered him with a cloth and placed him on a large board, attached to a cart. By night two guards were set to watch the body, but fear seized them and they fled. In the morning his body was not on the board. On the previous night many, not only Orthodox but also Tatars, had seen how two radiant clouds did shine over the place where lay the body of the martyr, and although many wild animals roamed the steppes, not one of them had touched him. In the morning everyone said: "Prince Michael is a saint, and innocently murdered". From the Horde the body of the prince was transferred to Moscow, where they buried him in the church of the Saviour-Wood in the Kremlin. It was only a year later in 1319 that at Tver they learned about the fate of their prince. At the wish of his spouse, Princess Anna (Comm. 2 October), and at the request of the Tver people, the relics of Saint Michael of Tver were transferred to his native city and on 6 September 1320 were placed in the church built by him in honour of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Local festal celebration of the holy nobleborn prince began soon after the transfer of his relics to Tver, and at a 1549 Sobor (Council) there took place the general Church glorification of the saint. On 24 November 1632 the undecayed relics of Saint Michael were uncovered. The holy prince has often rendered graced help to the Russian land. In 1606 the Polish and Lithuanians besieging Tver saw repeatedly, how from the city there rode out a wondrous horseman upon a white horse with sword in hand, turning them to flight. Later viewing an icon of holy nobleborn Prince Michael, they affirmed with an oath to the Tver archbishop Theoktist, that the horseman was indeed Saint Michael himself.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Apostles Philemon and Archippus, Martyr Apphia, wife of Philemon, and St. Onesimus, disciple of St. Paul (ca. 109). New Hieromartyr Vladimir priest (1932). New Hieromartyr Iosaph bishop of Mogilev, New Hieromartyrs John, Basil, Paul, Jacob, Theodore, John, Ilia, Alexis, Aphanasius priests and Hieromartyrs Gerasimus, Eutychius, Abenner, Sabbas, Mark and Martyr Boris (1937). Venerable Paraskeva confessor (1953). St. Yaropolk-Peter, prince of Vladimir in Volhynia (1086). Martyr Procopius the Reader at Caesarea in Palestine (303). Martyr Menignus at Parium (250). Venerable Agabbas of Syria (5th c.). Righteous Michael the Soldier of Bulgaria (866). St. Callistus II, patriarch of Constantinople (Mt. Athos) (1397). St. Clement of Ochrid, bishop of Greater Macedonia (916). St. Germanus of Eikoiphinissa in Macedonia (9th c.). Martyrs Stephen, Mark, and Mark (another) at Antioch in Pisidia (4th c.). Martyr Agapion of Greece (304).

**23 November / 6 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — St Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium** — A fellow-countryman and friend of St Basil the Great and other great saints of the fourth century, Amphilochius early forsook the bustle of the world and withdrew to a cave where, as the solitary, he lived in asceticism for forty years. The episcopal throne in Iconium then fell empty, and Amphilochius was chosen in a wonderful way and consecrated as Bishop of Iconium. He was a marvellous shepherd and a great defender of the purity of the Orthodox faith, and took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381. He fought zealously against Macedonius, and against the Arians and the Eunomians. He personally begged Theodosius the Great to drive the Arians out of every city in the Empire, but the Emperor did not comply with his request. After a few days, Amphilochius came before the Emperor again. When the bishop was taken into the presence-chamber, the Emperor was sitting on his throne with his son Arcadius, whom he had taken as co-Emperor, sitting at his right hand. Entering the room, Amphilochius did reverence to Theodosius, but ignored Arcadius as though he were not there. Infuriated by this, the Emperor Theodosius commanded that Amphilochius be instantly driven from court. The saint then said to the Emperor: 'Do you see, O Emperor, how you do not tolerate a slight paid to your son? In the same way, God the Father does not tolerate dishonour paid to His Son, turning with loathing from those who blaspheme against Him, and being angered at that accursed Arian heresy.' Hearing this, the Emperor understood the reason for Amphilochius's seeming disrespect towards his son, and marvelled at his wisdom and daring. Among many other works, Amphilochius wrote several books on the Faith. He entered into rest in 395 in great old age, and went to immortal life.

**St Alexander of the Neva (Nevsky)** - The son of Prince Yaroslav, his heart was drawn to God from his youth. He overcame the Swedes on the river Neva on July 15th, 1240, whence he took the name 'of the Neva'. On that occasion, Ss Boris and Gleb appeared to one of Alexander's generals and promised their aid to the great prince, their kinsman. Among the Golden Horde of the Tartars, he refused to sacrifice to idols or pass through fire. The Tartar Khan valued him for his wisdom, and his physical strength and beauty. He built many churches, and performed innumerable works of mercy. He entered into rest at the age of forty-three, on November 14th, 1263, today being the commemoration of the translation of his relics to the city of Vladimir.



**St. Metrophanes, bishop of Voronezh** - Sainted Mitrophan, Bishop of Voronezh, in the world Mikhail (Michael), was born 8 November 1623. In the synodikon (memorial-list) belonging to the saint, the list begins especially with persons of priestly dignity, and this gives a basis to suggest, that he was born into priestly lineage. From the Spiritual last-testimony of Sainted Mitrophan is known, that he "was born of pious parents and was raised by them in the incorrupt piety of the Eastern Church, in the Orthodox faith". Until age 40 the saint lived in the world: he was married, had a son Ioann and served as a parish priest. The place of pastoral activity of the priest Mikhail was the village of Sidorov, situated at the River Molokhta, a tributary of the Teza flowing to the Klyaz'ma, not far from the city of Shui (now Vladimir district). Having lost his spouse, priest Mikhail took monastic vows with the name Mitrophan in the Zolotnikovsk wilderness in 1663. In the synodikon of the monastery the origin of Saint Mitrophan that begins with the words: "Origin of black clergy Mitrophan is of Sidorovsk". After three years of monastic life the priest-monk Mitrophan was chosen hegumen of the Yakroma Kosma monastery [cf. 14 October]. He guided the monastery for 10 years, shewing himself zealous as its head. By his efforts here they raised up a church in honour of the All-Merciful Saviour Not-Made-by-Hand Image.

Patriarch Joakim (1674-1690), learning about the deep piety of Saint Mitrophan, raised him in 1675 to the dignity of archimandrite of the then known Makarievo-Unzhensk monastery. Under the supervision of the saint, a church was built there in honour of the Annunciation (Blagoveschenie) of the Most Holy Mother of God, together with a refectory and bell-tower. At the Moscow Sobor (Council) of 1681-1682 among the number of measures taken for the struggle against the old-ritualist schism, and with the goal in mind of improvement of Christian enlightenment among the Orthodox populace, it was resolved to increase the number of dioceses and to open up new cathedrals at: Voronezh, Tambov, Kholmogor and Great-Ustiug. Saint Mitrophan was summoned to the capital and on 2 April 1682 was ordained bishop of Voronezh by Patriarch Joakim and sixteen archpastors. The beginning of bishop's service of Sainted Mitrophan co-incided with a terrible time of troubles for Rus' and a Church schism. Upon his arrival at Voronezh the saint first of all sent out to the pastors of his diocese a circular missive, in which he urged his pastors to moral improvement. "Venerable priests of God Most-High! - wrote the saint, - Lead the flock of Christ! Ye ought to possess bright mental eyes, enlightened by the light of reasoning, in order to lead others to the correct path. In the words of the Lord, ye ought to be yourselves the light: "ye art the light of the world" (Mt. 5: 14)... Christ the Saviour, entrusting the flock to His apostle, thrice said to him: pastor, as though inspiring him that the image of pastorate is threefold: the word of teaching, prayer in benefit of the Holy Mysteries, and the example of life. Act ye also by all three methods: give example by a good life, teach your people and pray for them, strengthening them by the Holy Mysteries; above all enlighten the unbelieving by holy Baptism, and lead sinners to repentance. Be attentive to the sick, so that their lives be not deprived of the communing of the Holy Mysteries and the anointing with holy oil".

Saint Mitrophan began his arch-pastoral activity with the building of a new cathedral church in honour of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God, replacing an old wooden temple. In 1692 the cathedral with chapels in honour of the Archistrategos Michael and Saint Nicholas was consecrated. In the 20 years that Sainted Mitrophan was bishop, the number of churches increased from 182 to 239, and two monasteries were founded: the Korotoyask Ascension (Voznesenie) and the Bitiugsk Trinity monasteries. And within the existing monasteries, he concerned himself about eradicating the unseemingly and disorders, emphasising strict life according to monastic rule. The first Voronezh bishop eagerly concerned himself about the needs of his flock. He consoled both the poor and the wealthy, was a defender of widows and orphans, and an advocate of the wronged. His home served as an hostel for strangers and an hospice for the sick. The saint prayed not only for the living, but also for dead Christians, and particularly for soldiers fallen for the Fatherland, inscribing their names in the memorial list of the synodikon. Remembering them at Proskomedie [priest's preparation of the gifts preceding Liturgy], Sainted Mitrophan said: "If a righteous soul, then be there a greater portion of worthiness; if however be a sinner, then be there a communion with the mercy of God".

There existed a great friendship of Sainted Mitrophan with Sainted Pitirim, Bishop of Tambov (Comm. 28 July). They not only kept up correspondence, but also met for spiritual talk. The history of the founding near Tambov of the Tregulyaev John the Precursor monastery was connected with the friendship of the bishops. On 15 September 1688 Saint Mitrophan visited with Saint Pitirim. Three of them together (with them was the priest Vasili) took a stroll, to a place of solitary prayers of the Tambov archpastor, and there they chose the place for the future monastery. Saint Mitrophan, a man intensely patriotic, by his own moral authority, kind-heartedness and prayers contributed to the reforms of Peter I, the necessity and purpose of which he well understood. With the building of a fleet at Voronezh for a campaign against Azov, Saint Mitrophan urged the nation to fully support Peter I. This was particularly important, since many regarded the construction of a fleet as an useless affair. The saint did not limit himself only to advice to the tsar, but rendered also material support to the state treasury, which needed the money for the construction of the fleet, and he provided all the means, aware that they would go for the welfare of the nation.

The patriotic feelings of the saint were combined in his soul with unflinching faith and strict Orthodox conviction, on account of which he did not fear incurring the tsar's wrath. Thus, the saint refused to go to court to Peter I, since there stood there statues of pagan gods, and although for disobedience to the imperial will disgrace threatened the saint, he remained uncompromising. Peter gave orders to remove the statues and from that time was imbued with greater respect for the bishop. Sainted Mitrophan died in 1703 in extreme old age, taking before death the schema with the name Makarii. The funeral was done 4 December. Tsar Peter I himself carried the coffin from the cathedral to the tomb. Taking leave, he said: "There remains for me no greater such holy elder. Memory eternal be to him". One of the remarkable memorials of the life and activity of Saint Mitrophan is his Spiritual Testament. In it he says: "By Divine destiny I have arrived at old age and now I have exhausted my natural strength. Wherefore I have adjudged this my final writing... When my sinful soul is released from its union with the flesh, I entrust it to the bosom of the Wisdom of God having created it, that it might find favour as the work of His hands, and the sinful bones I grant to the mother of all, in expectation thence of the resurrection of the dead". Further on, addressing pastors and the flocks, the saint says: "The simple sinner giveth answer to God for only his soul alone, but priests can come to torment for many, in neglecting the sheep, from which they do gather milk and wool... For everyone such the rule of wise men is: do work, preserve a balance - ye will be rich; drink temperately, eat little - ye will be healthy; do good, shun evil - ye will be saved". The commemoration of Sainted Mitrophan was established in 1832.

**Also commemorated on this day:** St. Gregory, bishop of Agrigentum (680). New Hieromartyr Seraphim (1931). St. John confessor (1932). New Hieromartyr Boris bishop of Ivanonsk, Eleazar Spyridonov of Eupatoria priest, Crimea and Martyr Alexander (1937). New Martyr Archimandrite Gregory (Peradze) of Georgia, who suffered in Auschwitz, Poland (1942). St. Sisinius the confessor, bishop of Cyzicus (ca. 325). Martyr Theodore of Antioch (4th c.). Venerable Ischyryon, bishop in Egypt and hermit of Scete. St. Amphilochius of the Kiev Caves, bishop of Volhynia (1122). St. Anthony of Iezeru-Vilcea (1714). Venerable Trudo, abbot (693). St. Helenus of Tarsus, bishop. St. Dionysius I, patriarch of Constantinople (15th c.).

**24 November / 7 December — Afterfeast of the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos — Nativity Fast — The Holy and Great Martyr Catherine —** The daughter of King Constus, she lived with her mother in Alexandria after her father's death. Her mother was secretly a Christian and, through her spiritual father, brought Catherine to the Christian faith. In a vision, St Catherine received a ring from the Lord Jesus Himself as a sign of her betrothal to Him. This ring remains on her finger to this day. Catherine was greatly gifted by God, exceptionally well-educated in Greek philosophy, medicine, rhetoric and logic, and added great physical beauty to this. When the wicked Emperor Maxentius offered sacrifice to idols and ordered everyone to do the same, St Catherine came with daring before him and denounced his idolatrous errors. The Emperor, seeing that she surpassed him in wisdom and learning, summoned fifty of the wisest men, to dispute with her about faith and put her to shame, but Catherine was wiser than they, and put them to shame. The furious Emperor commanded that all fifty wise men be burned. These wise men, at St Catherine's prayers, all confessed the name of Christ at the moment of death, and proclaimed themselves Christians. When the martyr was in prison, she brought Porphyrius the general, with two hundred of his soldiers, to the Faith, and also the Empress, Augusta-Vasilissa. They all suffered for Christ. At St Catherine's martyrdom, an angel of God appeared to her, stopping and breaking the wheel on which she was being tortured, and after that the Lord Christ Himself appeared to her, strengthening her. After many tortures, Catherine was beheaded with the sword at the age of eighteen, on November 24th, 310. Milk flowed from her body in place of blood. Her wonderworking relics are preserved on Sinai.

**The Holy Great-Martyr Mercurius -** When Emperor Decius once waged war against the barbarians, there was in his army the commander of an Armenian regiment called the Martenesians. This commander was named Mercurius. In battle, an angel of the Lord appeared to Mercurius, placed a sword in his hand, and assured him of victory over his enemies. Indeed, Mercurius displayed wonderful courage, mowing down the enemy like grass. Following this glorious victory Emperor Decius made him chief commander of his army, but envious men reported Mercurius to the emperor for being a Christian, a fact which he did not hide but openly acknowledged before the emperor. Mercurius was tortured harshly and at length; he was cut into strips with knives and burned with fire. An angel of God appeared to him in prison and healed him. Finally, the emperor proclaimed that General Mercurius be beheaded in Cappadocia. When they beheaded him, his body became as white as snow and emitted a most wonderful incense-like fragrance. His miracle-working relics healed many of the sick. This most wonderful soldier of Christ suffered for the Faith sometime between the years 251 and 259 and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of his King and God.

**Hieromartyr Mercurius of Smolensk -** The Holy Martyr Merkurii of Smolensk was a Slav by birth, probably from Moravia, the descendant of a princely line. Brought up in Orthodoxy, Saint Merkurii in zeal for the true faith set off from his own native land to Rus', where he served in the army of the Smolensk prince. The saintly soldier secretly led an ascetic life - he was strict in fasting, chaste,

spending his nights at prayer, and spiritually preparing himself to suffer for faith in Christ. In the year 1239 an horde of Tatars (Mongols), having already laid waste to many a Russian city, appeared in the vicinity of Smolensk and set up camp 25 versts from it at Dolgomost', threatening with ruin the city and its holy places. A church-warden, praying by night in the Smolensk cathedral in front of a wonderworking image of the Mother of God, heard the voice of the Queen of Heaven, commanding him to find the holy warrior and say to him: "Mercurii, go forth into military foray, as the Sovereign Lady doth summon thee". The soldier himself came into the cathedral and heard the voice of the All-Pure Virgin, sending him to fight the enemy and promising him Heavenly help.

The warrior of Christ set off that very night to the Tatar camp at Dolgomost'. He fought there with the leader of the Tatar army - a giant possessed of immense strength. He killed him and entered into single-combat with the enemy host. Invoking the Name of the Lord and of the All-Pure Mother of God, the holy warrior destroyed many of the enemy. The Tatar warriors watch with terror as lightning-bearing men and a radiant Woman aided Saint Mercurii in the fight, and unable to stand up against the warrior of Christ, they retreated in flight. Saint Mercurii in the battle was himself killed by the son of the Tatar giant killed by him. The inhabitants of Smolensk, saved through the miraculous intervention of the Lord and the Most Holy Mother of God, reverently buried the body of the soldier-martyr in the cathedral of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God. Soon after his death, Saint Mercurii appeared in a vision to the church-warden and ordered that his armour be hung over the grave, promising the Smolensk people constant help and intervention in every sorrow and struggle. Even now at present in the Smolensk cathedral church are still preserved the sandals of the holy Martyr Mercurii. The festal celebration to him was established at the end of the XVI Century, and already in 1509 the inhabitants of Smolensk were calling him their especial patron.

**Also commemorated on this day:** Venerable Mercurius, the Faster of the Kievan Caves, far caves (14th C). New Hieromartyr Eugraphus (1919). New Hieromartyrs Eugene and Michael priests, Virgin-martyr Anysia (1937). New Hieromartyrs Alexander, Alexis, John, Cornelius, and Metrophanes priests (1937). Martyrs Augusta (Faustina) the Empress, Porphyrius, and 200 soldiers at Alexandria with Great-martyr Catherine (305). Venerable Mastridia of Alexandria (1060). Venerable Simon, abbot of Soiga Monastery (Vologda) (1561). Martyr Philothea of Romania (1060). St. Gregory, founder of the monastery of the Golden Rock in Pontus. Martyr Alexander at Corinth (4th C). Venerable Luke, steward of the Kiev Caves (13th c.). St. Hermogenes, bishop of Agrigentum (ca. 260). Venerable Romanus of Bordeaux (382), and Venerable Protasius, hermit of Auvergne (6th c.). Venerable Portianus of Arthone (527). St. Minver, virgin of Cornwall. Marys Philemenus, Christopher, Eugene, Procopius, and another Christopher. Martyr Chrysogenes and Monk-martyr Mark Triglinos. Hieromartyrs Clement, pope of Rome (101), and Peter, archbishop of Alexandria (311). St. Malchus of Chalcis in Syria. St. Nicodemus the Younger of Philokalos in Thessalonica (ca. 1305).

### ‡ Daily Scripture Readings ‡

**Monday** - 1 Thessalonians 2:20-3:8; Luke 17:20-25

**Tuesday** - 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 17:26-37; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; Luke 18:15-17, 26-30

**Wednesday** - Luke 1:39-49, 56 (Matins Gospel); Hebrews 9:1-7 (Theotokos); Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (Theotokos)

**Thursday** - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8; Luke 18:31-34; Philemon 1:1-25 (Apostles); Luke 10:1-15 (Apostles)

**Friday** - Matthew 11:27-30 (Matins Gospel); 1 Thessalonians 5:9-13, 24-28; Luke 19:12-28; Galatians 5:22-6:2 (St. Alexander); Matthew 11:27-30 (St. Alexander)

**Saturday** - 2 Corinthians 11:1-6; Luke 10:19-21; Ephesians 6:10-17 (Great-martyr Catherine); Luke 21:12-19 (Great-martyr Catherine)

## **HYMN OF PRAISE - Saints Joachim and Anna**

The parents of the Holy Virgin Lead her to the holy Temple, And according to their promise They give her to the Lord. They lead the Temple to the Temple, While angels chant, And chant with joy To the young Virgin in purest attire.

The virgins accompany our Virgin, With hymns and tapers; Zacharias leads her To the Holy of Holies; And into the Holy Place he takes her, Where the awesome mystery is hidden.

Where the Ark of the Covenant is, Where the golden lampstand is, Where the staff and the manna are, Into the guarding place of all mysteries; There the pure Virgin is led-The Mystical Ark of the Living Christ.

### **REFLECTION**

Submit yourself to the will of God and do not pry too closely into God's judgments, for you can lose your mind. The judgments of God are innumerable and unfathomable. A monk in the wilderness, imagining that he had attained perfection, prayed to God that He would reveal to him His various judgments in the lives of men. God put the thought in his mind to go to a distant place to inquire of a spiritual elder concerning this. However, while the monk was on his way, an angel of God in the form of an ordinary man joined him, saying that he too wanted to go to that elder. Thus travelling together, they came upon the house of a God-fearing man, who treated them well, giving them to eat from a silver platter. When they had eaten, the angel took the platter and threw it into the sea. The monk found this both amazing and unjust, but he remained silent. The second day they came upon the house of another hospitable man who cordially received and treated them as kinsmen. Before leaving, that man brought out his only son for the travelers to bless. The angel of God then took the child by the throat and strangled him. The monk was greatly angered and asked the angel who he was, and why he had committed such misdeeds. The angel meekly replied to him: ``The first man was pleasing to God in all things and had nothing in his house that was attained by injustice except that silver platter. By God's judgment, I threw that stolen platter away, so that the man would be righteous before God in all things. The other man was pleasing to God and had nothing in his house that would bring down the wrath of God except his son, who-had he matured-would have become a great criminal and a demonic vessel. Therefore, by God's judgment, I strangled that child in time to save his soul, for the sake of his father's goodness, and to save the father from many miseries. Behold, such are the mysteries and the unfathomable judgments of God. And you, elder, should return to your cell and not strive vainly by inquiring into that which is in the authority of the One God."